WHO'S WHO IN EUGENE DANCE PAGE 4 BURLESQUE AND BIG BIRDS PAGE 9 Q&A WITH ALITO ALESSI PAGE 2

dance

EUGENE WEEKLY'S 2013 GUIDE

Mad Hot Ballroom

Betty Waterhouse trades rock 'n' roll for ballroom dance

PAGE 8

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER



DANCEABILITY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ALITO ALESSI WITH DANCE PARTNER KAREN NELSON

Mr. Dance International

ALITO ALESSI HAS BEEN SHAPING THE DANCE WORLD FOR MORE THAN A QUARTER CENTURY *by Alex Notman*

There is perhaps no one better known in the local dance community than international dance visionary Alito Alessi. The Eugene-based dancer, teacher and artistic director for DanceAbility International created the Joint Forces Dance Company and DanceAbility — a globally renowned method that explores artistic expression between people with and without disabilities through movement — with his dance partner Karen Nelson in 1987. And, naturally for a dancer, he just can't stay in one place. This spring, he was chosen as an "arts envoy" by the U.S. State Department, a role that sent him to Indonesia, the Philippines and Mongolia to teach DanceAbility. *EW* caught up with Alessi digitally while he was in Greece before he headed to Austria, Italy and Spain to teach dance workshops.

Tell me about yourself outside of dancing.

I am a father of two boys (the second, soon to be born), and a husband. Family is the most important part of my life. I had an unstable family growing up and lived alone from when I was 12.

I have studied many forms of bodywork and practiced tai chi chuan and aikido. I love to travel and have worked in many countries. I also love being home. I love to run, and living in Eugene is a great place for that. I first came to Eugene to go to the UO to run, but I was swept in the ideologies of the early '70s, stopped believing in competition and soon joined the Eugene Dance Collective instead.

Why dancing?

I began dancing out of the need to keep movement alive in my life. I needed it for survival in a way — to keep the intelligence of my body ever present in my life.

What initially drew you to dancing?

I have always danced, even as a kid on the streets. We danced to James Brown. It got my attention and felt good, for my self-esteem and so on.

When did you start dancing?

Besides dancing as one of my main pastimes as a young teenager, in 1972, I began dancing with the Eugene Dance Collective. There were about 35 of us. Many of them went on to be influential in the world of contemporary dance. The forming of the WOW Hall was tied in closely with our group.

Who has been the most influential person to you in your dance career?

Steve Paxton. He initiated the dance form, contact improvisation. Contact improvisation grew out of the counterculture of the late '60s and reflected some of the new values — of each individual listening to one another and connecting with each other deeply, through our own direct experience, unmediated by traditional institutions or teachers that had all the answers.

I value a lot what Anna Halprin has done for the world community of dance, too. From the 1960s and onwards, she brought a lot of people together through dance — nonprofessionals — who weren't used to being together at all, let alone in an artistic context: people of European and African descent together, old and young, people grieving or sick, etc. And she made pieces with many dancers, outside of theaters, designed to touch, impact or heal the whole community.

I believe my dance work should have a purpose, a social impact. I believe all bodies speak, and society needs every voice involved in order to evolve fully.

Who is your favorite dancer?

Emery Blackwell, a local dancer with cerebral palsy. He makes the most of his abilities, and is the most inspiring presence I have worked with.

What is your favorite dance or piece of choreography?

The Hoop Dance, created with Karen Nelson [and I] in 1985. It was probably the first piece, worldwide, that took contact improvisation into choreography.

I'm really excited about my current project. It is an innovative, cross-disciplinary piece in collaboration with Frances Bronet, dean of the School of Architecture and Allied Arts (UO), who designed the interactive, mobile set. It will feature a large, all-star cast of DanceAbility company members, faculty from both LCC and University of Oregon Dance departments and other local professional dancers. Jeffrey Stolet, the director of Intermedia Music Technology at the UO, is composing the music. It will be held Nov. 1 at Lane Community College's Ragozzino Performance Hall.

Why DanceAbility?

My generation in contemporary dance believed dance was for everybody. I didn't see that actually happening around me, so I decided to see what that would be like: all people, of all abilities together, equally. After that first experiment, it made the most sense to me. I don't see it as "dance and disability," really. I see it as all people dancing. I feel the magic, again and again, of environments where everybody is learning and creating, equally.

What is your favorite place to dance in Eugene?

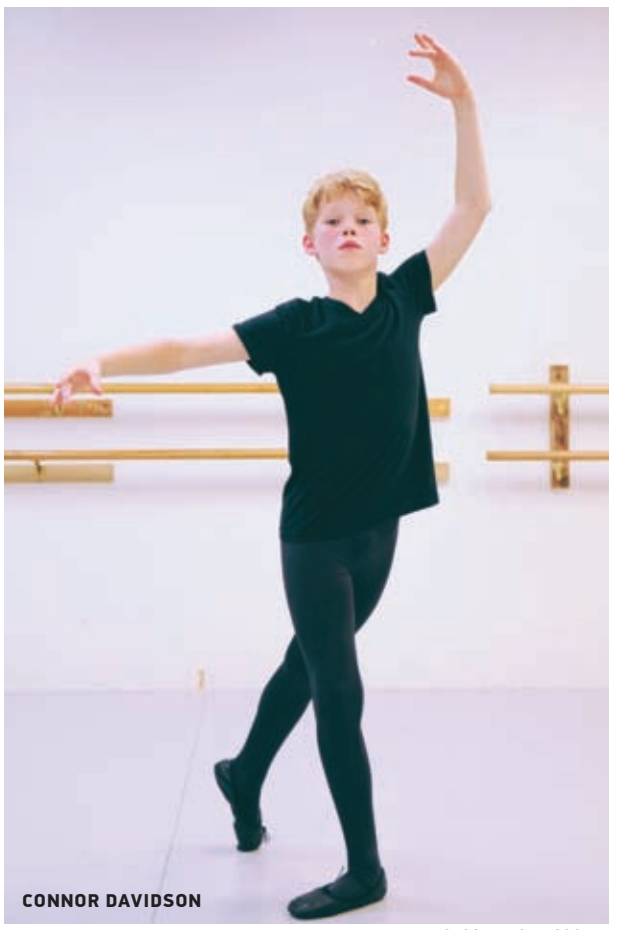
The WOW Hall because it holds so many memories for me. I began there and have done many things there over the past 40 years. It has a great floor.

What advice would you give to a beginning dancer?

Follow your own interest and desire. Learn to listen to yourself, others and your community, and never forget nature. ■

Turn to page 4 and meet more movers and shakers in the local dance community.


NATHAN ROWELL


CONNOR DAVIDSON

PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

Men in Tights

AFTER EIGHT YEARS, OREGON BALLET ACADEMY'S TUITION-FREE BOYS PROGRAM HELPS ALTER THE INDUSTRY *by Lauren Messman*

Every Wednesday Anthony Carter, 15, suits up for practice. He throws on a T-shirt and joins the other boys as they sweat through 90 minutes of complex combinations, draining jumps and — on a hard day — upward of 200 push-ups. Afterwards, they head to the barre to decompress and leave feeling focused, energized and confident.

Carter is one of the many ballet dancers at the Oregon Ballet Academy (OBA) in Eugene. In an industry dominated by women, tutus and tights, OBA offers a tuition-free, boys-only ballet program. For eight years, director John Grensback has been offering the class for boys ages 9 to 18. The weekly class incorporates technique and strength training and provides a comfortable and competitive environment for boys to explore ballet, work hard and, most importantly, have fun.

"Girls are more focused," Grensback says. "Boys have to have more fun." As a young boy, Grensback studied ballet with other boys in Chicago before moving toward an illustrious 50-year career dancing professionally in the Houston Ballet, New York City Ballet and Joffrey Ballet. In many ways, the boys program allows him to give back to the community and teach the way he was taught.

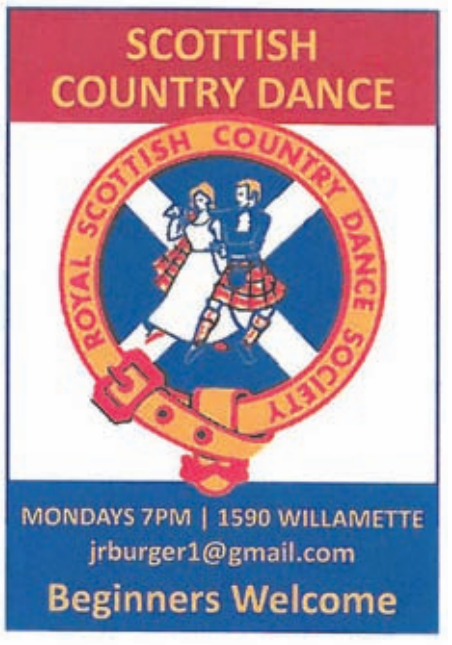
The class brings together boys of all different ages and skill levels and focuses on enriching ballet technique as well as strength and coordination. While about one-third of the boys join because they have sisters at OBA, many come to enhance their other interests. Rafael Batya, 11, hopes the class will nurture his passion for musical theater. Skeptical at first, Trystan Devouassoux, 14, joined to channel his creativity and challenge his coordination. For Carter, it was his genuine curiosity to see what all his female friends were fussing about: They are in agreement that ballet is much harder than it looks.

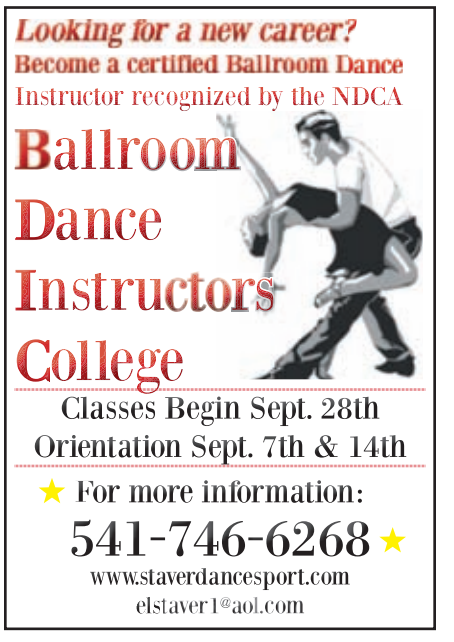
In addition to providing extensive knowledge and skill, Grensback understands the challenges that men face in a female-dominated industry. "It's really intimidating to walk into a room full of girls, wearing tights and not know what you're doing," says Nick Peregrino, 26. After being taken under Grensback's wing at 18, Peregrino is now dancing professionally at BalletFleming in Pennsylvania. He believes that his ability to view ballet from a male perspective, a skill he learned at OBA, has given him an advantage over his fellow male performers. "A man's job is to make the woman look good, and that's ingrained in me," he says. Grensback's emphasis on being a strong partner gave Peregrino the confidence to be a "prince" to his female counterparts.

Fellow student-turned-pro Mayim Stiller, 18, agrees. "It's always about the girl," he says. Stiller, who landed a lead role in a performance for New York's School of American Ballet in June, will begin professionally dancing for the Los Angeles Ballet this October. "Something that's really great about the boys program was it showed you that ballet could still be masculine," he says. "To get 30 to 40 guys in a ballet class is incredible. It's a great accomplishment because it can be hard at a young age for a guy to start ballet."

Whether dreaming of going pro or just interested in meeting people, Carter highly recommends the class. "I don't know what I want to do with my future, but I feel like whatever it is, the work ethic and commitment will help me in the long run," he says. As the next year of the boys program approaches, beginning Sept. 11, Carter gives a word of advice for prospective dancers: "Don't worry about the tights. You get used to them within a couple of days." ■







Movers & Shakers

MEET THE PEOPLE WHO SHAPE EUGENE'S DANCE COMMUNITY

Words by Alex Notman / Photos by Todd Cooper

Eugene may not have Moscow's Bolshoi or New York's Martha Graham Dance Company; however, just below the city's surface is a vibrant world of dance, of clacking heels and pointed toes, of "pop, lock and drops" and ball changes. From classical performances at the Eugene Ballet Company and sensual Middle Eastern folk dance at Celebration Belly Dance and Yoga to pioneering modern dance at the University of Oregon and glitzy hip-hop productions at Work Dance Company, there's a groove for everyone's mood. In our first-ever dance issue, *EW* has sought out the people who are elevating the level of dance in our community and the level of community in our dance. Meet this year's movers and shakers.



THE CLASSIC

Toni Pimble

Artistic director and resident choreographer, Eugene Ballet Company

Toni Pimble has been a fixture in the Eugene ballet scene since 1978, but her dance history dates back to her childhood living room in England, where she would twirl to her parents' classical music. The living room became the prestigious Elmhurst School for Dance where Pimble danced from ages 11-18 before joining dance companies in Germany, where she met Riley Grannan, now Eugene Ballet Company's managing director. They hopped the pond to Oregon to start their own company. "We were adventuresome young people," Pimble says with a smile. "I never imagined it would grow so big." The Eugene Ballet Company is big; the company is a Eugene and Pacific Northwest cornerstone of ballet with 21 dancers from around the country performing 40-50 shows a year, including classics like *The Nutcracker* and *Scheherazade* (and some not-so-classics like the 2014 production of *Zoot Suit Riot* with the Cherry Poppin' Daddies).



THE INNOVATORS

Hannah Bontrager

Executive director and choreographer, Ballet Fantastique

Donna Bontrager

Artistic director and choreographer, Ballet Fantastique

Cinderella as a rock opera? A tongue-in-cheek feminist twist on the *The Misadventures of Casanova*? *Pride and Prejudice* set in the Roaring Twenties? The women behind Ballet Fantastique's productions, mother-and-daughter team Donna and Hannah, are not afraid to push the boundaries of the Russian Vaganova method taught at their company. The duo, who have more than 50 years of ballet training combined, also refuse to cast dancers by the rigid standards rampant in ballet; there are no height restrictions. "For us, diversity is worth it," Hannah says. Together, they research, write and choreograph all of their ballets from scratch — for *Casanova* they prepped by reading the playboy's autobiography. The world is taking notice of their innovative, whimsical approach. Ballet Fantastique recently returned from Italy, where they performed *As You Like It: A Wild West Ballet*. *Cinderella: A Rock Opera Ballet* will tour Trinidad and Tobago next summer.



THE TREND SETTER

Cornel Hardiman aka Karress Ann Slaughter

Female illusionist, G.L.A.M. Nights

If you've been to a G.L.A.M. night (formerly at John Henry's, now at Diablo's), you're familiar with Karress Ann Slaughter's killer, on-the-cultural-pulse moves — usually done in 6-inch heels. For those of you who haven't, G.L.A.M. host Diva Simone Slaughter sums it up best: "He was part of the movement that brought modern music as a part of drag and not just the regular gay anthems that the rest of us have as a part of our repertoire. He made it cool to do Lil' Kim and Missy Elliot when Madonna and Donna Summers were the staple." The father and grandfather has been performing for 22 years, crafting his own choreography, pulling from dance innovators like Michael and Janet Jackson, Ciara and Beyoncé. Hardiman says he first knew he was pushing "old-school drag" to "new-school drag" when he performed Lil' Kim's "How Many Licks" at Neighbors before it closed. "I think that kind of shocked a lot of people," he says, laughing.

THE AVANT-GARDIST

Brad Garner

UO assistant professor of dance; dancer and choreographer, Harmonic Laboratory

The choreographer behind Harmonic Laboratory's cutting edge "Four Corners" performance at the Hult last spring didn't start with dance; Garner started with gymnastics, completing a year of Olympic training when he was a high school sophomore. But soon gymnastics turned into a passion for modern dance, which he studied at the esteemed University of Minnesota Department of Theatre Arts & Dance with famous guest artists such as Doug Varone. "I liked athleticism, wildness, innovation," Garner says of choosing modern. Now a professor at the UO, Garner pushes dance to its cerebral edges, fusing it with visual arts and technology, drawing inspiration from unexpected sources like Picasso's cubist studies and Newton's laws of motion. Next up, Garner takes his intellectual exercise on the road: Harmonic Laboratory has been invited to perform the piece "Zero Crossing" at the Kyma International Sound Symposium in Brussels Sept. 12-15.



THE PRODUCER

Nathan Boozer

Director and choreographer, Work Dance Company

Let's be clear, when you see a Nathan Boozer production like the Lady Gaga-inspired *Wonderland*, it's not a recital, it's a *show* (and usually a sold-out one at that). "It's about the production," says Boozer, who combines his hip-hop- and jazz-driven choreography with video visual effects on a 50-by-30-foot screen, high-tech lighting and props. "I want my audiences to completely feel and experience what we're trying to do on stage." The Churchill High and LCC graduate's Work Dance Company is relatively new to Eugene's dance scene: It opened in 2008 with four female dancers — there are now 21 dancers. "I feel like with dance we're able to tell such an intricate story," he says. "It's been around since the dawn of time."

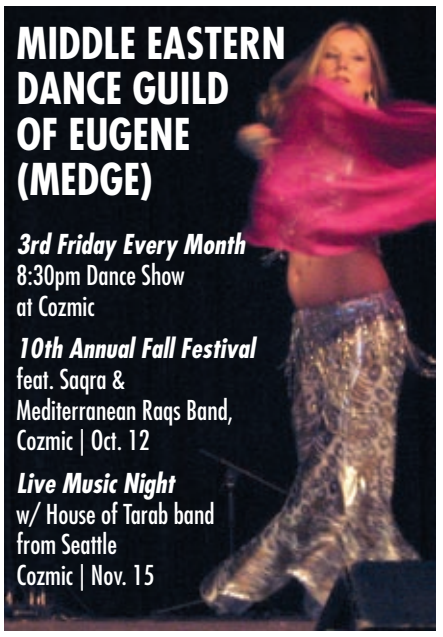


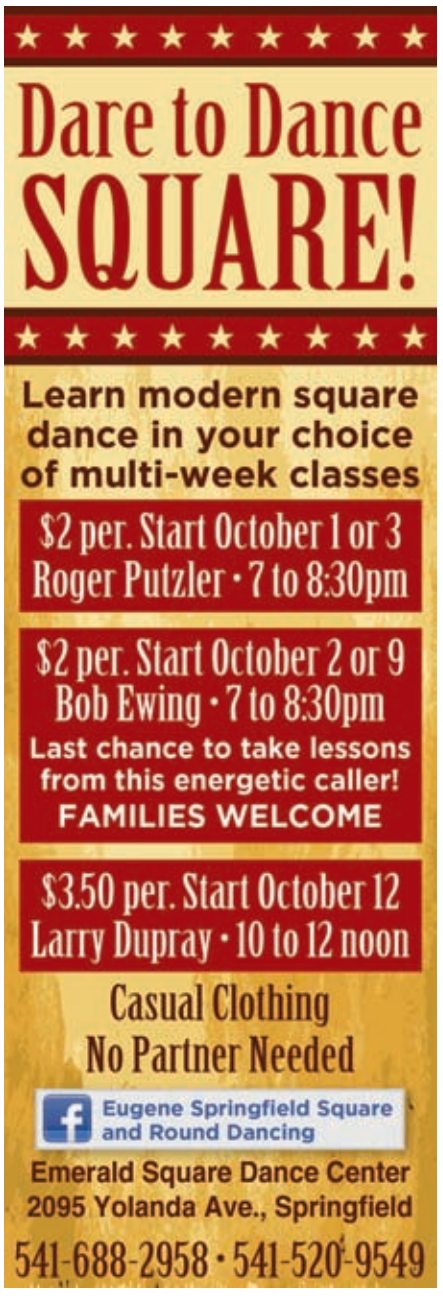
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THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

Geni Morrow

Director, The EDGE; producer and founder, Dance for a Reason

"A cartwheel a day keeps the doctor away," Morrow says. The Newport native should know; in the past 40 years, she's been a gymnast, a gymnast coach, a cheerleader and, of course, a dancer. After studying and performing classic jazz and free-form modern at Portland State University, University of Alaska and the Jones Ludin Dance Company in Honolulu, she moved to Eugene and began her community-centric dance empire, including The EDGE dance company and one of the biggest annual dance and fundraising events in Eugene, Dance for a Reason. "I had this idea that I could kick my program off and have this show where I can invite different groups in of different styles," she says. "There were more people in the show than in the audience that first year … Now we're selling 1,700 tickets." This January, Dance for a Reason celebrates 20 years.



THE CULTURAL FORCE

Kathy "Sabine" Forrester

Dancer, owner and teacher, Celebration Belly Dance and Yoga

Some dancers have toe shoes or tutus, but Kathy "Sabine" Forrester has two massive swords. Forrester has been studying Middle Eastern folk dance — tribal, Turkish and Egyptian-style belly dancing, sword dancing — since she discovered it via her sister's college roomie from Jordan 25 years ago. "The music is what first appealed to me," Forrester says. "The rhythms are interesting and exotic." She has been teaching belly dance in Eugene since 1999, but she brings teachers into her studio from all walks of dance — African, capoeira, samba, Bollywood, Zumba and world beat. Find her dancing solo with two swords or with her troupe Tribalation! monthly at Cozmic and on their float at the Eugene Celebration. "Learn about the culture," she says. "There's a lot behind the music and the dance."



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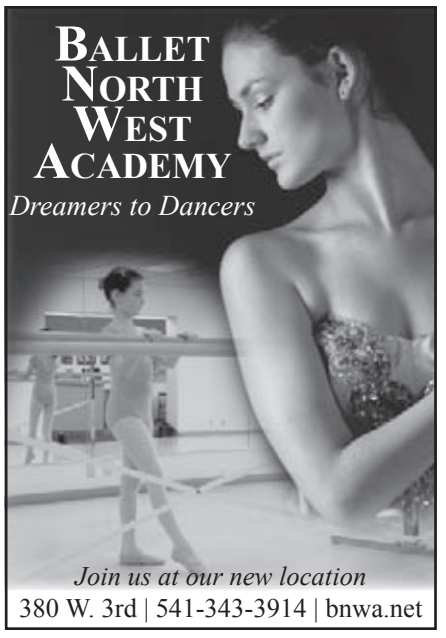
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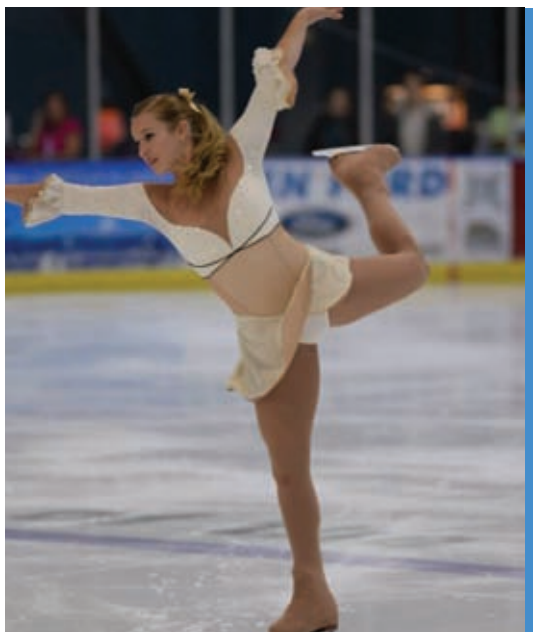
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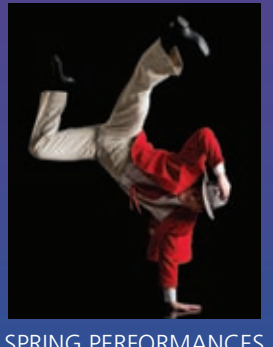
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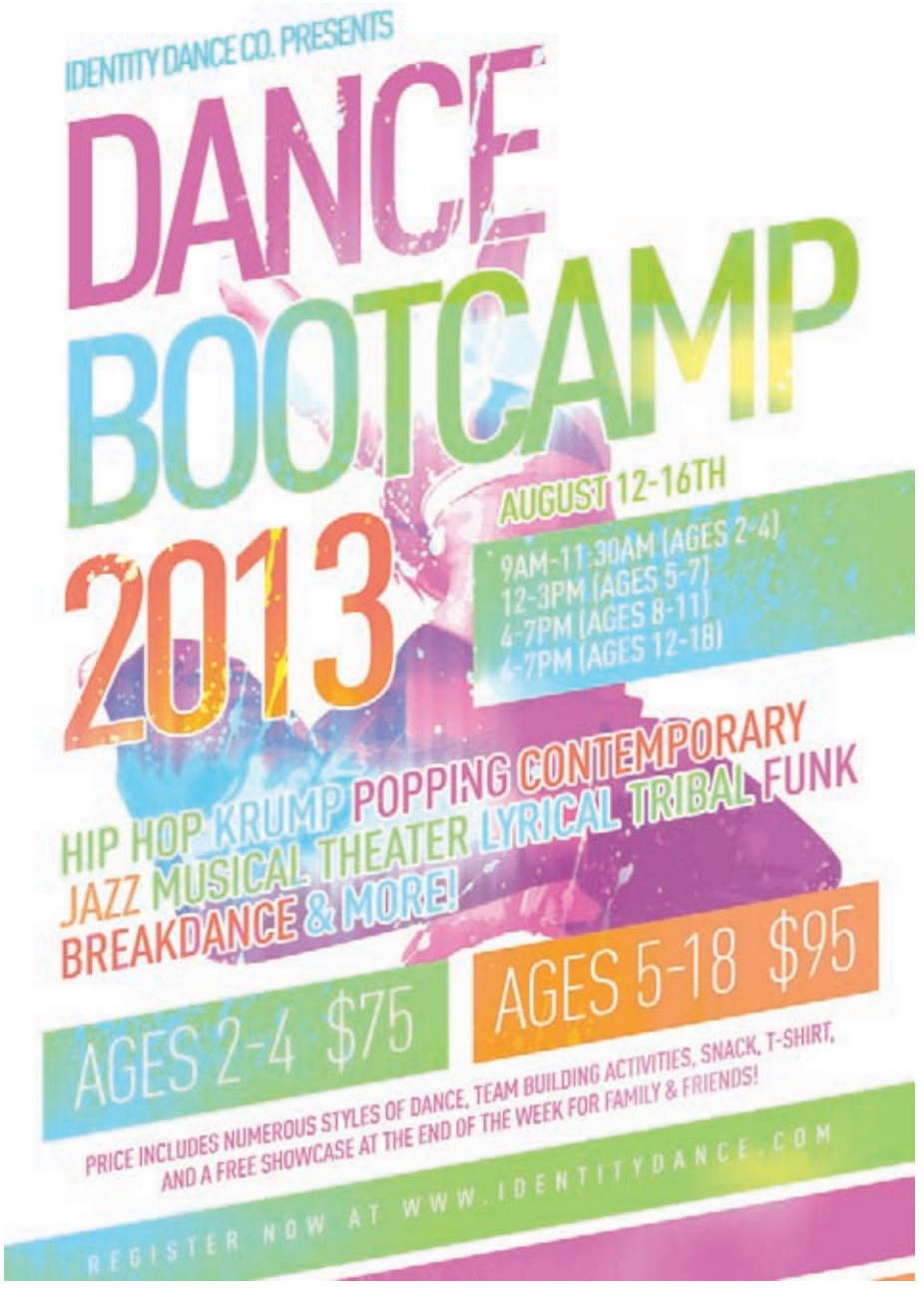
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Dancing Queen

LOCAL OCTOGENARIAN BETTY WATERHOUSE SWEEPS THE EMERALD BALL BALLROOM DANCING COMPETITION *by Rachael Carnes*

This year, Betty Waterhouse decided it was time to give competitive ballroom dancing a whirl. After a mere month and a half of training, she sashayed through the Emerald Ball, a competition held each May in Los Angeles that attracts over 15,000 participants, earning seven first-place titles in her age division.

"It's almost unheard of that someone could prepare that quickly," says Linda Staver of StaverDanceSport, Waterhouse's studio. "We didn't anticipate that she would go that soon to a competition, but her comment was 'The sooner the better, because you never know how long I'll be able to do this!'" Then 85 years old, recovering from hip replacement surgery, Waterhouse recalls her goal: "I wanted to get better, to improve my technique and also my balance."

Born in 1927 — "Tell them my age, or you won't have much of a story," she says — in El Paso, Texas, Waterhouse's personality spills over with energy. Growing up on a ranch, Waterhouse married at 18, and she and her husband Charles (everyone called him Jack) "lived a life of adventure," Waterhouse says, that included sailing, motorcycling and dancing. "But never at the nightclubs. We danced at home or on our boat. And we always had music on, big bands, jazz." Waterhouse and Jack were married for 65 years, until his death in 2010. Waterhouse has always loved travel and encourages her "four kids, 12 grands and 10 great-grands" to pursue their passions, especially if it means learning new things. She is the perfect role model: "The more structured dancing I'm doing now is harder for me," she says. "I'm used to rock 'n' roll."

But training for competition was fun, Waterhouse says, "Because I simply love to dance. And I wanted to learn the steps properly." With little time before the Emerald Ball, dancing partner Edward Staver coached Waterhouse through the Holy Trinity of ballroom rhythms — the rumba, waltz, foxtrot — and as her mastery of the steps grew, so did Waterhouse's confidence. "Once I took all those private lessons, and I knew how good Ed was and I knew the category I would be in, ages 82 to 100, I knew we could hold our own."

Then the world around her caught 'Betty Fever.' Her family and friends made plans to accompany Waterhouse to L.A. Her son-in-law, in jest, gave Waterhouse a stage name: Bettina Wataskaya. Neighbors began referring to her as "The Bettina."

Waterhouse credits ballroom dance with developing her physical and mental strength.

When asked what's next, Waterhouse says, "I would like to see if my body, and my head, can do another competition."

In a photo album she shares, full of memories from her glory days on the dance floor at the Emerald Ball, there's a handwritten quote: "I do not want to die with a dance left in my body." And it's signed Bettina Wataskaya. ■



EDWARD STAVER AND 'THE BETTINA' PRACTICE AT STAVERDANCESPORT

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

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Hip Hop Tots (Ages 3-5)	3:15p-4:00p
Dance Fusion 2 (Ages 6+)	4:00p-5:00p
Intermediate Contemporary	5:00p-6:00p
Beginning/Intermediate Modern (Ages 13+)	6:00p-7:00p
Tuesday	
Intermediate/Advanced Jazz Funk	7:30p-8:30p
R & B Hip Hop (Ages 16+)	8:30p-9:30p
Wednesday	
Beginning Kids Hip Hop (Ages 5-8)	3:30p-4:30p
Jazz 2 (Placement Required)	4:30p-5:30p
Thursday	
Pre Ballet (Ages 5+)	3:00p-4:00p
Beginning/Intermediate Leaps & Turns (Ages 9+)	4:00p-5:00p
Beginning Contemporary (Ages 10+)	5:00p-6:00p
Conditioning/Technique (Ages 16+)	7:30p-8:30p
Advanced Contemporary	8:30p-9:30p
Friday	
Dance Fusion 3 (Ages 7+)	3:30p-4:30p
Intermediate Kids Hip Hop (Ages 9+)	4:30p-5:30p
Jazz 1 (Ages 9+)	5:30p-6:30p
Teen Hip Hop (Ages 12+)	6:30p-7:30p
Saturday	
Fairytale Ballet (Ages 3+)	9:15a-10:00a
Dance Fusion 1 (Ages 4+)	10:00a-11:00a
Dance Tricks/Tumbling (Ages 9+)	11:00a-12:00p
Dance Tricks/Tumbling (Ages 14+)	12:00p-1:00p
Sunday	
Beginning Adult Hip Hop	4:00p-5:00p

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Burlesque Boom

EUGENE'S BURLESQUE AND VARIETY TROUPES GIVE THE TRADITION A MODERN AND SILLY SPIN *by William Kennedy*

Burlesque is just stripping for hipsters, right? Or the kind of show to which Don Draper from *Mad Men* would take clients (performed at places with names like "The Boom Boom Room")?

Wrong. The truth of the matter is burlesque has a long and storied history, and while dance is vital to burlesque, the popular variety shows also feature comedy, live music and social commentary.

These centuries-old theatrical dance productions are no longer tucked away in dark nightclubs or confined to the wee hours of the night; burlesque troupes are performing at your favorite neighborhood bar, at festivals and taking their show on the road like any band. Some troupes are even tailoring their shows for the whole family. New York City's Pretty Things Peep Show has performed at Diablo's, the Portland-based Rose City Shimmy lit up the Lane County Fair in years past and last month The Ultraviolets Black Light Burlesque from Hawaii titillated audiences at Sam Bond's.

But Eugene also has its own homegrown burlesque scene with a modern spin: The Broadway Revue Burlesque Show has settled in nicely at Luckey's after losing its long-time home at the venue formerly known as John Henry's, The Red Raven Follies vaudeville troupe performs regularly around the Pacific Northwest and The Trudy Bauchery Variety Show is a monthly favorite at Sam Bond's.

"My productions have a similar structure to those of the mid-19th-century burlesque shows," says Jennifer Brom, aka Trudy Bauchery, producer of The Trudy Bauchery Variety Show. "They have comedians, musicians, theatrical spoofs and performers in drag. It is an arena where taboo subjects can be explored with laughter and creativity."

"Our shows are a mix of vaudeville, vintage dance, circus arts, comedy, music and burlesque," says Jennifer "Ember" Woodruff of The Red Raven Follies. "We also enjoy providing family-friendly performances for all-ages shows." In October, The Red Raven Follies will launch a series of "performance slams" at Luckey's. "This will be a fun series of monthly, supportive, performance competitions that will culminate with the finalists performing in a variety show," Woodruff says.

"I like to think of our show as an ever-evolving beast," says Matt Depew, stage manager for The Broadway Revue. "Our show brings a lot of variety, with comedic skits, fully-themed shows and copious amounts of sex appeal."

"Burlesque audiences in Eugene are amazing, rowdy and fun," Woodruff adds. "They make what we do absolutely worth every moment."

Burlesque gained popularity in England and America in the mid-19th century. From the very beginning, burlesque featured bawdy dancing and humor. In the early 20th century — paralleling vaudeville — the risqué portions of the show became emphasized. As burlesque fell out of fashion with the rise of movies and TV, the spirit of the medium lived on.

"As a performer, I often reveal how highly influenced I've been by Jim Henson and *The Muppet Show*," Brom says. The Trudy Bauchery show includes outrageous costumes like a seven-foot egg-laying bird and a lactating alien. "For me, burlesque is the means, laughter is the mode and thinking outside the box is the objective," Brom says.

Burlesque's sexualized nature is often controversial since feminism started a long discussion about the male gaze. "It isn't just about being sexy for me," Brom says. "It's about the laughter; it's about exploring and bashing the general public's feminine ideals. What better way to expound myths than through laughter? We are all sexual beings, be our style silly or serious, strange or seductive." ■

Catch the next Trudy Bauchery Variety Show, featuring Portland's renowned "pop-n-lock" queen Angelique DeVil, 9:30 pm Saturday, Aug. 17, at Sam Bond's; $8. Find The Broadway Revue Sunday nights at Luckey's and The Red Raven Follies perform the Eugene Celebration Saturday, Aug. 24.



JENNIFER BROM OF THE TRUDY BAUCHERY VARIETY SHOW
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I.C.U. Crew

FORGET INTENSIVE CARE — THIS MALE HIP-HOP GROUP WILL KEEP HEARTS BEATING *by Vanessa Salvia*



ALL THAT! DANCE COMPANY'S ALL-MALE HIP-HOP DANCE TROUPE HAS COMPETED ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Lounging on the overstuffed chairs and couches of All That! Dance Company's studio, Jordan Ross and twin brothers Coleman and Kaelen Byrum look like any clean-cut, athletic 18-year-olds. Only Ross's I.C.U. Dance Crew T-shirt gives any indication that the guys might not be into just the usual track and football.

Yet get them and the other two crew members, 18-year-olds Logan McGann and Aidan Ziegler-Hansen, on stage and there's no mistaking that these guys are an award-winning hip-hop dance group.

"It's my mom's fault!" Coleman says, laughing and pointing to his mother, Sarah Beth Byrum, All That! Dance Company's artistic director and owner. She has owned the studio since her sons were tots. "We started taking classes at age 3 [and] stuck with it," Coleman says. "We had friends who started taking classes around that age, 3 or 4, so we were just like, they were doing it and we wanted to do it too."

The I.C.U. Crew, which stands for "In Constant Unity," are all ready to embark on their post-high-school lives. But in the 15 years that they've been dancing together, they've experienced a world that only dance could have opened up to them, and they're helping bring up the next generation of young male dancers.

These young men are not only strong and smart; they know they're doing something important. "You don't see a lot of strong, young male dancers come together to form a troupe," Ross says. "So this could be considered unusual, but it's also really empowering to show that men can dance and it's not frowned upon. I think most of society thinks that dance is not a sport, but it is. You're working hard and using muscles that you never thought you had. The next day you're just so sore!"

They really are "in constant unity" with each other, laughing and echoing each other's thoughts and finishing each other's sentences as longtime friends will do. Sarah Beth Byrum is proud of having worked with each young man and the level to which they've taken their craft.

"I think it's really great to see confident young male dancers in the dance community," she says. "And we have over 30 younger guys coming up that are dancing now. These guys come in and work with them and assist the instructors; they've led camps and done choreography with them … they are handing down that legacy as males in the dance world and that is really significant. To have confident young male dancers as mentors to these young guys is really important."

The crew first competed when the guys were in 6th grade. They typically compete three to four times per year. They have danced in New York City and were featured on *ABC World News*. They recently performed in Disneyland, Seattle and Las Vegas, received rave reviews for a weeklong stint as cruise ship entertainment and have taken workshops from world-renowned choreographers. "And you're with your friends," says Ross, "which is the best part." ■

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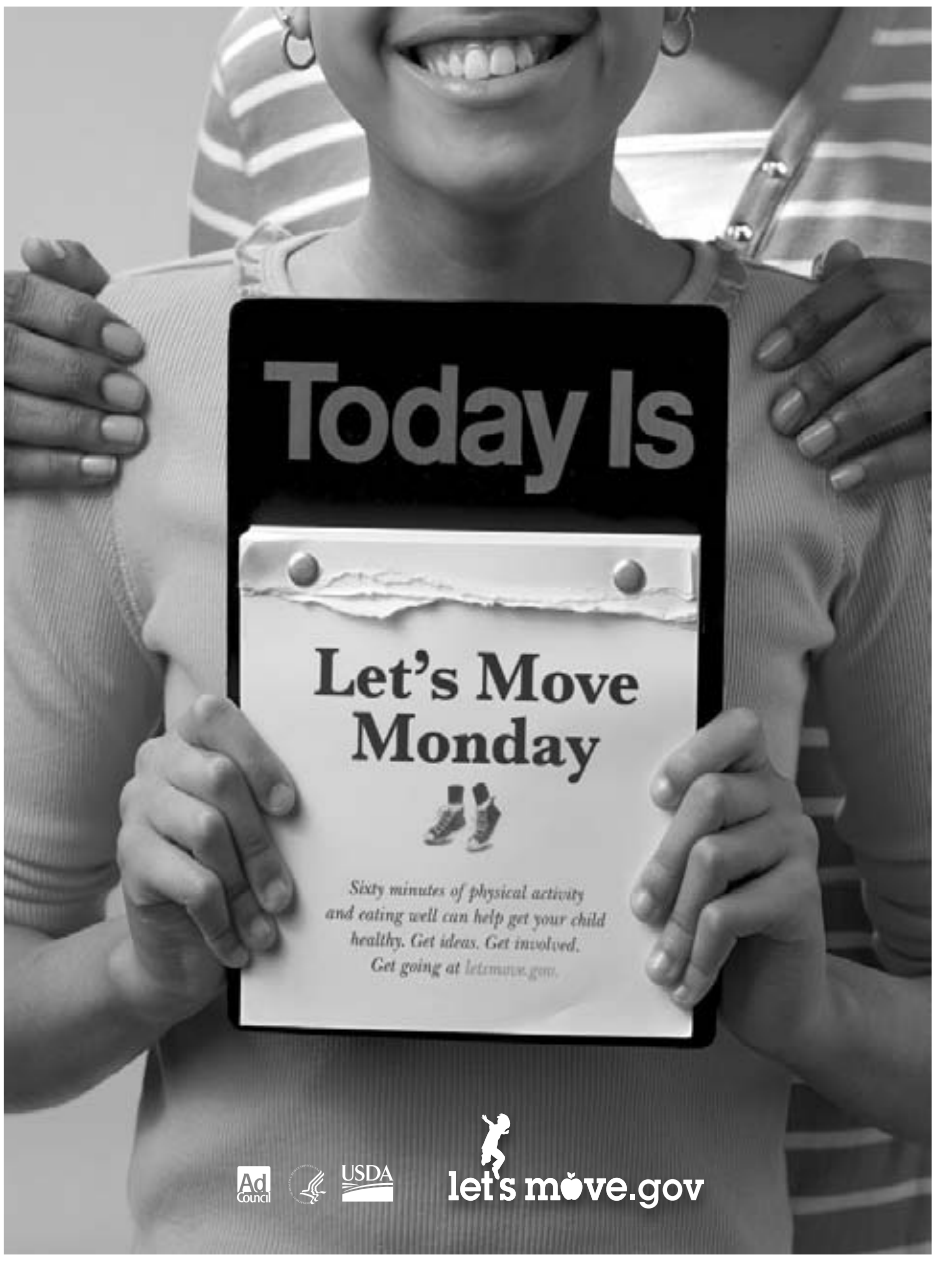
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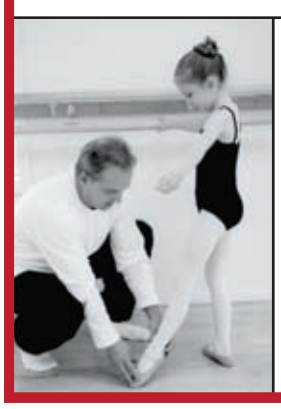
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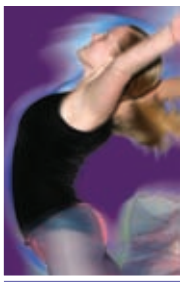


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